



# *Oberammergau*

Josephine Helena Short

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#### OBERRAMMERGAU

The peak of the Kofel rises 1500 feet above the village and is surmounted by a gigantic cross.

# Oberammergau

BY

JOSEPHINE HELENA SHORT

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**To**  
*Anton and Mathilde Lang*  
*and My Other Friends*  
*in Oberammergau*

## Preface

**I**N August of 1900 I saw the Passion Play in Oberammergau. During the days that followed, my thoughts, constantly returning to the little village, especially on the days when the Play was given, led me back for a longer stay and three performances of the Play, and eventually again drew me back from Scotland for the last three representations and another month in the interesting little community. My visits with my friends there during the intervening years have always given me the same pleasure and inspiration.

There is no other village like Oberammergau. The people there are united by one ideal, the fulfilment of a vow made by their forefathers nearly three hundred years ago. They feel that they were born for this purpose and to it they devote their lives. They represent their Passion Play now with the same love and reverence with which they have given it through the centuries.

"Oberammergau und sein Passionsspiel, 1910," by Ferdinand Feldigl, gives the feeling of the village in the words of the Burgomaster, Johann Lang, at the laying of the corner-stone of the new Passion theatre in 1899: "As we again approach the fulfilment of the vow of our fore-



fathers, who can censure us if we have endeavored to place upon our Play the stamp of our great time, in so far as it allows itself to be united with our inherited traditions? But though we wish to respond to the reasonable wishes of the public, we are not willing to allow ourselves to be tempted by the applause of the crowd to open all our gates and doors to new things. We will hold fast to the ideals of which our Passion Play is the basis. May the day never come on which Ammergau breaks faith with its traditions. On the contrary, may there hover over us and animate us in the new theatre also, the old spirit, the spirit of our fathers."

The adherence of the community to this one lofty ideal for so long a period has developed a character so strong, so consistent, that even in the glare of publicity which surrounds them every ten years they keep their inborn simplicity and unself-consciousness and are able not only to impersonate, but for the time actually to live, the characters they represent.

All who make their journey to Oberammergau a pilgrimage will find their anticipations realized both in the lives of the villagers and in their presentation of the Passion Play, the most moving religious observance in the world to-day.

J. H. S.

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# OBERAMMERGAU



## CHAPTER I

### THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE

*describe* **T**HE peaceful village of Oberammergau lies in the Highlands of Bavaria, about seventy miles southwest of Munich. It is surrounded on three sides by larch- and fir-clad mountains, the nearest of which is a craggy peak called the Kofel, the guardian of the village. On its summit a lofty cross, fitting emblem of Oberammergau, is the first object to meet the traveller's eye as he approaches the valley. The village, with an altitude of 2,745 feet, stands in the midst of green fields on the banks of the shining Ammer, a swift mountain stream, that winding in from the meadows speeds through the village and out into the meadows again. The white houses, each surrounded by a flower-garden and many of them decorated with bright frescoes of Biblical subjects, painted in the latter part of the eighteenth century, cluster around the village church, the tower of which, surmounted by its small mosque-like dome, seems to keep guard over the little

place. ) The churchyard is a beautiful, peaceful spot, where after service the worshippers stop to say a prayer over the flower-covered graves of their dear ones. This is the beautiful home of a people who have reverently dedicated their lives to one great purpose, which they have followed out with such steadfastness that their tiny isolated village has become known to the whole world.

The fact that the name of Oberammergau, which means "upper district of the Ammer," is on almost every tongue, that newspapers and periodicals are making constant reference to the little village and its Passion Play, does not mean that the people of Oberammergau are doing some new thing. For five hundred years or more they have been giving the Passion Play for themselves, and probably with just as much love and devotion as they do now even when so many of the world go to see them.

The enthusiastic accounts written by Guido Görres, Baron de Roisin, and Ludwig Steub of the Passion Play of 1840 were perhaps Oberammergau's first introduction to the world. It was still more widely heralded by Edward Devrient's splendid description of the representation of 1850, when Tobias Flunger's Christus so entirely fulfilled Devrient's ideal of the sacred character. Dean Stanley saw the Passion Play in 1860 and wrote a most appreciative account of it.



THE VILLAGE CHURCH



THE PASSION THEATRE





## THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE 3

In 1870 the Play was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war and many of the principal performers were drafted for service, even Joseph Mayr, the Christus of that year, being obliged to go. Through the favor of the King, however, he was not called into active service but was stationed at Munich. The following year, when peace was declared, the Oberammergauers asked permission from the government to resume the interrupted performances as a thanksgiving for the victorious termination of the war.

People came in great numbers to this representation and the Play has become more widely known each decade until now the audience is made up of visitors from almost every part of the globe, instead of the peasants from the surrounding villages who were formerly the sole witnesses. Formerly the road to Oberammergau fulfilled the Ammergau proverb, "The way to the Passionsspiel should be a way of penance," as it led up so steep a mountain road that even those who went in carriages had to dismount and toil up the steepest part while four horses had much difficulty in pulling up the empty carriage. To-day the traveller is taken by rail to the very outskirts of the village.

Of the two hundred thousand or more people who visited Oberammergau in 1900, comparatively few spent more than a day in the little village. The majority went away knowing little of the

lives and history of the inhabitants. All must have been deeply impressed by the Passion Play and many by even the little they saw of the villagers; others, incapable of appreciating the devoted spirit of the little community, carried away erroneous ideas which have been given to the world. It must be largely through these superficial observations that the report has gone abroad that the Oberammergauers have been spoiled by so much adulation and contact with the world and that they have commercialized their Passion Play.

The Oberammergauers are not spoiled and they have not commercialized their Play, which will be proved in a following chapter. They are so united in following their one high ideal which is founded on the rock of centuries of tradition and custom, that the tides of worldly visitors which threaten to submerge the village at the end of every decade flow away leaving very little impression on the strong personality of the inhabitants.

## CHAPTER II

### ORIGINS OF THE PLAY

**T**HOUGH Oberammergau, hemmed in by mountains and remote from great centres, has been so little known until within recent years, its history carries us back to the time of the Romans. The old Roman road from Italy to Augsburg, the Roman stronghold in the province of Vindeliccia, passed through the Valley of the Ammer, and the Roman legions had a station there which they called "Ad Coveliacas," meaning the Station at the Kofel. At a later period, during the Teutonic invasions, the barbaric hordes swept down and drove the Romans back into Italy and then occupied the country themselves. It is probable that the Bavarians, though descended from the Teutons, have also Celtic and Italian blood in their veins. And indeed, though they speak the German tongue, the inhabitants of Oberammergau seem to be, not of the German type, but a type by themselves. The Celtic element in their blood may account partly for their peculiar artistic development.

Even in the early times, when most of the vil-

lages of the country were in a condition of serfdom, Oberammergau had certain privileges held only by free towns. In the year 1330 the Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria founded in the beautiful Valley of Ettal, three miles from Oberammergau, a monastery, whose romantic history is closely interwoven with that of Oberammergau. It is related that Ludwig, the Bavarian, had just been crowned in Rome and that on his journey home he was attacked by enemies near Milan. While he was in the Monastery of Saint Victor praying for succor, a monk appeared to him bearing in his arms a beautiful image of the Madonna. He promised the Emperor divine aid if he would carry the sacred image north until he should receive a sign from heaven, and at the place where this was given, found a monastery for the preservation and worship of the Madonna. The Emperor gave the promise and departed with his holy burden.

The narrative goes on to say that after the Emperor's horse had climbed the steep road to the Valley of Ettal, it knelt three times and refused to go farther! The Emperor interpreted this as the heavenly message and here he founded the Monastery of Ettal. About the middle of the eighteenth century the buildings were struck by lightning and burned to the ground, but the image was saved and the Monastery rebuilt.



THE MONASTERY OF ETTAL



THE NEW ROAD TO OBERAMMERGAU



There the miraculous little Madonna is preserved and worshipped by many pilgrims even to this day.

It is maintained by some writers that this Monastery was built by Emperor Ludwig as a Grail Temple. It was his father who commanded the Minnesinger, Wolfram von Eschenbach, to write the epic poem "Titurel," in which there is a beautiful description of the Holy Grail and the Castle of Monsalvat. It would have been natural for the Emperor to have this ideal in mind when he founded this institution for the reception of the sacred statue. As guardians of the image he installed twenty-two Benedictine monks and thirteen knights with their ladies. He chose a most beautiful region for his Monastery, and the supposition may easily be true that after his rupture with the Vatican he quieted his wounded spirit by imagining himself another Amfortas as he sailed on the calm waters of the neighboring Plansee.

At the laying of the corner-stone, the Emperor gave to the villagers of Oberammergau a paper recognizing their freedom. This Monastery together with a still older one called Rottenbuch has had a great influence over the people of Oberammergau, for their monks were always interested in the gifted and devout villagers and in fact had considerable jurisdiction over them.

A period of great prosperity began at this time for the little mountain village. The road from Verona to Augsburg was restored, and was used now by the gay hunting cavalcades of the Emperor, and again by the caravans of German and Italian merchants. There was a law that all goods had to be unloaded and exposed for sale in the village, and the carters of Oberammergau had the exclusive right to transport the goods to the nearest station on either side. This brought the villagers into direct contact with the civilization and learning of the outside world, especially the flourishing towns of Augsburg and Nuremberg, whence they learned much of the art of the Middle Ages. It also gave them an opportunity to dispose of their wood-carvings, for which they had become noted even in those early times. These carvings were taken all over Europe, partly by the Oberammergauers themselves and partly by the foreign merchants.

The wars which began about the middle of the sixteenth century put an end to this time of prosperity. Instead of caravans of rich merchants, rough troupes of soldiers marched through the village, leaving poverty and misery in their train. And all these wars brought a heavy burden of taxation on the poor villagers.

In 1633, the year following the Swedish invasion, the plague broke out in the country. It



made such terrible ravages that many of the hamlets were almost depopulated. By maintaining the strictest quarantine and exercising great vigilance and precaution Oberammergau for some time remained free from the scourge. But Caspar Schüssler, an Oberammergauer who was working in Eschenlohe, a neighboring village, could not resist the longing to join his family for one of the annual church festivals, so he came over the mountains and stole into the village at night. In three days he died and during the next three weeks eighty-four of the people of Oberammergau succumbed to the pestilence.

In their affliction the chief members of the community met and made a solemn vow to represent the Passion Tragedy every ten years, and the chronicle states that "from this time on not a single man died, though many still had symptoms of the plague about them."

This vow was in accordance with the spirit of the time, for the period of the plague abounds in votive offerings. Many cities and towns built chapels or even churches, as the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice ; some made vows to celebrate mass at certain times, and others to have sacred processions.

Early in the eighteenth century came another period of peace and prosperity during which Oberammergau merchants established firms for

the sale of their carvings in different parts of Europe, as far away as St. Petersburg on the one hand and Cadiz on the other. But the heads of these firms almost always came back to spend their last days in their beloved village and naturally they brought with them many of the customs of the outside world.

Following this period there came a succession of wars with their attendant evils, which lasted with brief intermissions down through the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century. These were followed by failure of crops and famine. Now and again the river would flood the village.

All these misfortunes reduced the people of Oberammergau to a state of great poverty, but they always remained faithful to their vow and continued to give their Passion Play ; and in time they renewed their wood-carving industry. But not until the year 1880 did their fortunes begin to mend. After the Passion Play of that year they were able to pay some of their debts, and to begin some much-needed improvements in the village. The river which had often overflowed its banks and flooded the valley was controlled by embankments, the roads were improved. In later years they have put in a new water supply and have founded a hospital.

Ludwig Lang, teacher of drawing and wood-carving, established a school for wood-carving



**A FIELD CRUCIFIX**

Unterammegau in distance, three miles away.



**THE "MARY" OF 1880**

Photographed making hay, August, 1900.



and for some years carried it on without remuneration. It is now supported by the village, aided by the government, Ludwig Lang being the director. There is also an excellent village school to which every child is sent as soon as it is six years old.

Whether the Oberammergauers learned the art of wood-carving from outside sources or whether they originated it themselves is not known, but records state that they practised it early in the twelfth century. In "Oberammergau and its Passion Play," Frau Hermine Diemer writes : "The profession of carving was important. Territorial jurisdiction adjusted it with regulations of its own by founding a *Handwerksordnung*, 'Guild of Artisans.' The carvers protested and the title was altered to *Bildschnitzereiordnung*, 'Guild of Wood-carvers,' and carving was to be a profession. This was confirmed by Electoral vote on January 5, 1682." This art of sculpturing in wood has always been a source of inspiration to them in the production of the Passion Play and may have suggested it to them in the beginning.

As Oberammergau was in constant communication with the two friendly towns of Augsburg and Nuremberg, it is possible that the Oberammergauers with their highly developed artistic instincts were encouraged in the giving of their Passion Play by seeing the plays that took place

in those two art centres of the Middle Ages. Mystery plays were given in other parts of the country in the fourteenth century and it is probable that the Oberammergauers gave their Passion Play at an equally early date. A people unused to presenting the Play could not have prepared as elaborate a production in a few months as did the villagers of Oberammergau at the time they made their vow. They gave the Passion Play the following year, 1634, and after that every ten years up to 1674. In 1680 the date of representation was changed to the even decimal year. It has been given at the end of every decade since, except in 1770 and in 1810, when government edicts were sent out forbidding the performance of Mystery or Passion plays. Only the repeated solicitations of the villagers, stimulated by their determination to be true to the vow of their forefathers, won the desired royal permission to continue giving their Play.

The text that was used in 1664 is still preserved in the village, and the examination made by scholars convinces them that it was taken in part from a text used in Augsburg in the fifteenth century, and from a text by Sebastian Wild, Meistersinger in Nuremberg, in the middle of the sixteenth. This text was revised and additions were made at least three times before the eighteenth century; early in the nineteenth it was again re-

written and simplified by Father Ottmar Weiss of Ettal; and about thirty-five years ago the latest changes were made by the village priest, the Geistliche Rath or Spiritual Adviser, Joseph Aloys Daisenberger, a remarkable man who devoted the latter half of a strong, beautiful life to Oberammergau.

Thus we see that the Passion Play of the present time is a descendant and not a remnant, as it is so often called, of the Mystery Plays of the Middle Ages.

The Passion text is Scriptural and therefore free from sectarian coloring. The speeches of the Christus are taken almost word for word from the New Testament narrative. The music, composed by Rochus Dedler, an Oberammergau schoolmaster, in 1820, is simple and beautiful. One of the requirements of the schoolmaster at Oberammergau is that he shall be a musician and also be able to compose music.

The costumes are made of the finest materials, to withstand the exposure to sun and to rain throughout the summer. Many of the stuffs are imported from the Orient. Every decade all the principal characters have new costumes, the old ones being used for rainy days or for the "people,"—that is, the crowds represented in the Play. They are all designed and made by the Oberammergauers themselves, no one outside the village

being allowed to take part in the Play or to assist in any of their preparations. The only exception to this unwritten law was in the erection of the Passion theatre for 1900, when they employed a Munich firm and an artist from Vienna. The plan of the theatre, however, as well as the arrangement of the stage, originated with Beneficiat Unhoch, a native of Oberammergau, early in the nineteenth century.

The earliest performances, those previous to 1634, were given in the church ; but as the peasants from the neighboring villages began to come to the Play, it was given in the churchyard. In 1830 this place had become too small, so a stage was built in a meadow on the outskirts of the village, the site of the present theatre. Formerly the seats as well as the stage were open to the sky, and the spectators would sometimes be drenched by showers of rain and at others burned by the hot rays of the sun. The present auditorium, however, is covered, and is admirably arranged. Its four thousand seats, all numbered, are on one floor, the gradual upward slant of which enables every one in the audience to see the stage. The numerous entrances and exits, fourteen in all, give easy access to the seats and enable the large audience to disperse quickly.



## CHAPTER III

### PRACTICE PLAYS AND THE PLAYERS

**D**URING the interval of ten years between the Passion summers, the Oberammergauers give practice plays both sacred and historic, with occasional humorous sketches. In 1902, during a short visit I made there, they were presenting the play of "Esther." Only the villagers were present, but the play was given with the same dramatic fervor that one sees in the Passion Play.

In 1905 they revived an old play called the "Kreuzesschule," which they had not given since 1875. The Kreuzesschule is a reversal of the Passion Play, the action being from the Old Testament, the life of David, and the tableaux from the New. This was given several times in 1905 before large audiences in the Passion theatre. It was perfectly rendered, Andreas Lang, the Rabbi of 1900, taking the part of King David. It required a sudden readjustment of mind, however, to see Peter Rendl, the beloved Disciple John of 1900, appear as the dashing young prince

Absalom. Anton Lang was the Christus in the tableaux, but took no part in the action of the play.

In addition to the practice plays the Oberammergauers have a Liederkranz or choral society, which meets weekly; a Turnverein or athletic club, and also their orchestral rehearsals. They are faithful in celebrating all the church festivals, in which they frequently use the music of the Passion Play, as on Palm Sunday, when they sing "Hail to thee, hail to thee, Son of David," a beautiful choral sung at Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the opening scene of the Passion Play.

This constant practice develops the ability of each participant, thus making it possible for the committee to choose the best talent to represent the different characters in the Passion Play.

It is perhaps needless to state at this point that the majority of the people of Oberammergau are not peasants. On the contrary, though they live simply and even frugally and do some work in the fields, they are a refined, cultivated people, sensitive to all that is beautiful and good about them; and even more, in being able to express beauty and goodness in their own lives.

One cannot be in their presence and look at their strong, fine faces, many of which have great beauty of feature as well as of expression, without



ANDREAS LANG  
The "Peter" of 1910.



ANDREAS LANG AS DAVID  
In the "Kreuzeschule," 1905.



## PRACTICE PLAYS AND THE PLAYERS 17

being conscious of the nobility of their character. It is all unstudied and natural, their stately bearing, their gentle, courteous manner, their perfect composure in the midst of excitement, and with it all their true simplicity.

There are some peasants in the village, but the majority of the people are artists. Their art has always been inspired by a deeply religious feeling and by their beautiful surroundings. At the present time more than two hundred of the villagers are carvers, or sculptors in wood, many of the women even being proficient. They carve for the most part sacred objects, as crucifixes, figures of the apostles, often of life size, and scenes, like the Last Supper. There are a few who carve furniture and small objects.

The people of Oberammergau have such ever-present high aims and so many interesting and delightful things to think about and to plan and to do daily that the questions of food and clothes—such burning questions in the outside world—have their proper place in the little village and are limited to the needs of the villagers. Their temperate living gives them not only rather spare figures, but also the full use of their faculties, whether needed for felling a tree on the side of the mountain or for giving expression to the highest form of dramatic art. They have been so loyal to their ideals and the traditions of their an-

cestors that they have developed distinct types,—the Christ type, the Apostle type.

They are cordial and responsive and genuinely interested in the people who come to their village, but at the same time they have a fine reserve. Though they receive a world-wide advertising during the Passion year, they do not care for notoriety. During the summer of 1900 Anton Lang, the Christus, was betrothed to Mathilde Rutz, the beautiful daughter of Jakob Rutz, the Choragus, but the engagement was not made known until after the visitors had gone. When the village is thronged with tourists, many of whom, having made no previous arrangement for rooms, are unreasonable in their demands, one then has an excellent opportunity of comparing the dignity and courtesy of the native of Oberammergau with the bustling importunity of his guest. Fortunately, with all his other rare qualities, the Oberammergauer has a keen sense of humor.

Many of the young men of the place, after they have been through the village school, go to Munich and sometimes to Stuttgart and other cities, to continue their studies, but they always come back to Oberammergau to live, somewhat changed by their contact with the world but still loyal to the village and its traditions.

In 1900 I wrote home from Oberammergau :  
“ The people here have a fashion of saying as they

meet any one, stranger or native, in the streets, 'Grüss Gott,' 'God greets thee.' It is a pretty custom and I really feel injured when any one omits it.

"They are a delightful people to meet. They are so simple and natural and dignified, with a rare innate courtesy and refinement.

"Yesterday I again met Jakob Rutz, the leader of the chorus, whose gentle courtesy is charming. As he talks his face lights up with a rare smile. We also saw Thomas Rendl, who is ideal as St. Peter. He has a splendid face and his manner was also beautiful. Johann Zwink, whose marvellous rendering of the part of Judas is almost beyond description, was altogether simple and gentle and unassuming in his reception of us.

"Johann Zwink is a painter, Thomas Rendl a carver, and Jakob Rutz a smith. Such perfect courtesy, such absolute simplicity of manner and such absence of self-consciousness, I believe you could not meet elsewhere in the world.

"In talking with Anton Lang to-day I told him that the words, '*Ich bin dazu geboren und dazu bin ich in die Welt gekommen*' (Christ's answer to Pilate, 'To this end was I born, and for this came I into the world'), kept going through my mind. Instantly he seemed to become another being. The Christus look shone through his eyes and made his face beautiful as he replied: 'Yes,

Christ came into the world to die for mankind. He could have saved His life but He wished to give it to save the world.' "

The inspiring influence of Father Daisenberger, who died in 1883, is still felt in the village. He was born in Oberau, six miles from the Ammer Valley, was educated at Ettal under the learned priest, Ottmar Weiss, and was doubtless well acquainted with Oberammergau and the Passion Play. When the people united in asking him to become their priest, in 1845, he accepted. A sentence from a letter he wrote at that time shows the esteem he had for the people of Oberammergau: "The native charm of the Ammerthal, the loveliness of the village, the church, the parsonage, but still more the enlightenment of the inhabitants, their susceptibility to all that is noble and good . . . all had an extraordinary attraction for me." He was a man of scholarly mind and high ideals and for thirty-eight years was the guiding spirit of the community, making their interests his interests and ever leading them on to higher achievement.

Father Daisenberger directed the Passion Play and wrote many sacred and historic plays, among them "The Founding of the Monastery of Ettal," which the villagers give as practice plays. In 1875 at the request of King Ludwig II, he rewrote all the speeches of the Prologus as well





**A VILLAGE CHILD**  
Showing children's costume.



**THOMAS RENDL IN VILLAGE STREET**  
The "Peter" of 1900; "Simon of Bethany" in 1910.



## PRACTICE PLAYS AND THE PLAYERS 21

as much of the text of the Play. He ennobled the part of the Christus by taking his speeches as far as possible verbatim from the New Testament narrative.

The lines of Father Daisenberger's last poem, in their simple German, well express the sincerity of spirit of this beloved priest : —

“ Mein Gott, Dir hab ich mich ergeben,  
Was Du willst, das gescheh' an mir !  
Willst Du, ich soll noch länger leben  
In diesen Erdenthale hier,  
Mir ist es recht, ich danke Dir.

“ Doch nimmst Du dieses ird'sche Leben  
Schon bald, recht bald zurück von mir,  
Mit Freuden sei es hingegeben,  
Du gibst ein bess'res mir dafür,  
Mir ist es recht, ich danke Dir.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHARGE OF COMMERCIALISM

A QUOTATION from a little book on the Passion Play, written by Archdeacon Farrar after the representations of 1890, is interesting, as it gives his own view of the Oberammergauers as well as a remarkable sermon:—

“The remarks of Pastor Daisenberger, in a sermon preached on Whit Sunday, 1870, in the church at Oberammergau, are so complete a vindication of the play from all suggestions of sordid motives, and so strong a statement of its sacred character, that I cannot do better than reproduce them. He said, with touching dignity and sincerity: ‘Dear friends, you are called upon this year to fulfil a great and holy vow; you will, as it were, in some measure take part in the Apostolic office. From the day of Pentecost the Apostles went into all lands to preach Jesus the Crucified—His doctrines and His deeds, His life and His death, His resurrection and His glorification—to show to men how ancient prophecies, how the types of the Old Testament, were fulfilled in Him. We are not now to go forth into the world to make

known the Crucified, but thousands during this year will come to us, and ours will be the privilege to represent before them what the Apostles preached. If we work together with holy zeal worthily to represent these mysteries, then we may hope that, with God's grace, great blessings may ensue. Many pious Christians, touched by the representation of their Saviour's death, will return home edified and strengthened in their faith and love, and with renewed resolutions to continue His faithful disciples. Many of the lukewarm and frivolous, unable to throw off the solemn impressions they have received, will in future show that the seeds of a more Christian life were sown here. And it may be that the sight of the Redeemer's great love for mankind, and of His bitter sufferings for their sins, may draw tears of repentance from the eyes of sinners, and these tears, aided by God's good spirit, may be the beginning of a sincere conversion and this gazing on the Passion may be the way by which the Good Shepherd seeks and finds His lost sheep. But, dear friends, we can only hope for God's blessing if we undertake our work with pure motives and holy zeal, and not with selfish and vainglorious motives. If with the latter, God will look down upon us and upon our work with displeasure, we shall be misusing and dishonoring the most sacred things, we shall reap to

ourselves, instead of honor, blame; instead of gain, most bitter loss.

“‘It is not our aim to shine in the art of acting, that would be presumptuous and ridiculous in simple country people; but it must be the earnest desire of each one to try and represent worthily this most holy mystery. Each one who takes the least part in this work is a necessary link in the great chain; let him therefore endeavor to fulfil his task to the best of his ability, and thus contribute to the success of the whole.’

“Then, after addressing each class of performers upon their own peculiar work, the preacher adds: ‘But as the Apostles taught men not only by word, but also by their holy conversation, so must we endeavor, if our work is to be blessed to the hearts of men, to show, by our Christlike moral conduct, not merely before the public, but in our private life, the salutary effect produced on our souls by the consideration of the atoning death of our Lord. Let nothing go on either within or without the theatre, in the streets, in your houses, or in the church, which can give occasion for offence. The eyes of many strangers will be fixed, not only on our Play, but on ourselves. Let us so live that we may have nothing to fear from the all-searching eye of God, and the scrutinizing gaze of our fellow-men. Let us from this time show by increased zeal for our holy religion, by



VILLAGE BOYS, 1900

The boy at the right, Franz Lang, represents the "Right Thief" in 1900.



ANTON LANG

Who is a potter and stove-maker by trade.

our deep reverence for holy things, by our greater love for our Redeemer, by our pure morals, by our avoidance of sin, and our renewal of virtues, that the representation of the Passion is not only of spiritual benefit to others, but to ourselves as well. Let us pray fervently that that Spirit may assist us in the task we have undertaken. May He ever be with us and in us. Amen.' ”

Archdeacon Farrar adds : “ The comparison of the sweet, pure, happy, and deeply religious population of this Bavarian village, in which I did not hear one evil word, or see one unseemly sight, or find the slightest trace of intemperance, with the drunken squalor and blasphemy and vice of our London slums, is an injustice so gross as to call for the strongest reprobation. Nor less calumnious is the frequently repeated charge of greed. On the contrary, the people have shown the most beautiful and disinterested magnanimity. Not to speak of other proposals, in 1872 they refused no less than 60,000 florins, offered them if they would perform the Play in Vienna. The actors and the people have repeatedly risen superior to the temptations which the world, the flesh, and the devil seem determined to throw in their way. Three years ago 3,000 florins was offered them by an Englishman merely for the music of the Play, and they at once declined the offer.”

What Archdeacon Farrar wrote in 1890 is just



as true at the present day. Offers are constantly made to the villagers, individually and as a company, but money does not tempt them. When Joseph Mayr was asked by an American theatrical manager if he would go with the other performers to America to give the Passion Play, he replied: "Yes, we will go, if you will take the Kofel. We can never give the Passion Play except in the shadow of the Kofel." Anton Lang has been repeatedly approached by managers.

They throw open their homes, such clean, simple, cheerful homes, where they do all in their power to make you comfortable. They incur considerable expense for the extra supplies, such as bedding and furniture, for which the returns of the summer often have not repaid them. Also during the Passion summer they are obliged to procure most of their provisions from Munich and other places, at high prices. In former years the tourist agencies charged high rates for board and lodging in Oberammergau and paid the villagers only half and sometimes less than half the amount received. The people who have exploited the Play have doubtless made enormous profits, but those who live in Oberammergau and give the Play have had only small returns.

This year the Passion Play Committee have taken the matter into their own hands and are charging reasonable prices on a regular scale

according to the class of accommodation furnished.<sup>1</sup>

During six months or more the villagers are obliged to give up all their regular occupations. Their business connections are interrupted and sometimes broken altogether. The financial returns of the summer often do not compensate them for what they lose. The salaries of the players are small, the highest in 1900 being fifteen hundred marks, about three hundred and seventy-five dollars, for the whole season. The money made by the sale of tickets is devoted to communal purposes, the village being greatly improved from decade to decade, and for the payment of all debts incurred in preparing for the production of the Play.

<sup>1</sup> For tickets and accommodation write in English or German to Wohnungsbureau, Oberammergau, Germany.

## CHAPTER V

### CHOICE OF CHARACTERS

**T**HERE are between fourteen and fifteen hundred people in the little community closely knit together by their one ideal, which influences even the choice of their governing body. They have a Bürgermeister—Mayor—and a Council of Twelve, who are elected every five years. The present Mayor is Sebastian Bauer, who represented Pilate in 1900 and will have the same part again this year.

Guido Lang, himself an Oberammergauer, in his interesting "Guide to Oberammergau and its Passion Play, 1900," gives an excellent account of the duties of the Passion Play Committee: "This Committee is formed of the members of the Community Council, the Parish Priest, and six additional citizens, who are chosen, either because they have rendered great service in previous plays, or on account of their exceptional practical knowledge.

"As the Plays are an undertaking by the community, the Burgomaster is always President of the Committee. The Committee has charge of all preparations for the Play, such as negotiations



**THE PROLOGUS, 1900**

**Joseph Mayr, who represented the Christus in 1870-71, 1880,  
and 1890. Died in 1903.**

with the government, arranging the financial matters, the erection of the necessary buildings, and most important, the selection of the various representatives of the different characters. The latter is a very difficult and responsible task, for frequently the Committee is obliged, on account of the advanced age of some of the performers, to take from them rôles which they have filled acceptably and skilfully for years. The decisions are accepted graciously, although the pride of a lifetime is taken from them. At the same time important characters and parts must be entrusted to fresh talent, whose capabilities remain to be proven. It is therefore necessary to exercise the greatest care in the selection, and profound secrecy is laid upon the members of the Committee as to their consultations. Each member delivers to the Committee a written and sealed proposal for the appointments to be filled. After an elaborate discussion of the various propositions made, a secret ballot is taken. This constitutes the preliminary election. After an interval of a few days, a date for the final election is fixed. On that day the members of the Committee attend a special divine service and then assemble in the Council House for the decisive election. Once again the result of the preliminary election is briefly discussed, after which the final vote is given.

“ With feverish interest the entire population await the announcement of the results of the election, which brings to some unexpected honor ; to others, bitter disappointment. This election requires in all about two weeks of hard, unremitting work, and all breathe more freely after it is over.

“ Now the work commences in earnest ; almost every evening practice goes on. First single characters, then groups, then whole scenes are taken, while at the same time the singers and musicians are studying their parts.”

Ludwig Lang, the head of the carving school, is director of the Passion Play this year. In 1900 he was the assistant-director of the Play and also had the arrangement of all the tableaux as well as the stage-management. Every one who saw the tableaux in 1900 will remember how beautiful they were. They were perfect in composition and coloring. In some of them there were from three to four hundred people, half of whom were children ; yet the arrangement was always natural and graceful, though the figures were so motionless they might have been carved from stone. Ludwig Lang, who has evidently made a thorough study of old paintings and illuminated Bibles, designs all the costumes, which are made under the supervision of his sister, Josefa Lang. These costumes, from the simple garments worn by Christ and his disciples to the rich robes of

the High Priests and Pharisees, are works of art in themselves.

The present director of the Passion music is Ludwig Wittmann, the schoolmaster.

In the summer of 1900 Joseph Mayr, the Christus of 1870, '71, '80, and '90, recited the speeches of the Prologus with such splendid dignity that it must have been difficult for the committee to select any one to take his place, but doubtless with their excellent judgment they have chosen in Anton Lechner one who will fill the office worthily. Jakob Rutz, the Choragus of 1890 and 1900, will lead the Chorus again this year. His effective and noble rendering of the solos, many of which are beautiful, gave great pleasure to those who heard him in 1900.

The strength, dignity, and loveliness of Anton Lang's representation of the Christus ten years ago made his election for the same part this year a certainty. In 1900 he was only twenty-five years old. As his life since has been rich in experience, his Christus of 1910 may surpass even the Ammergau traditions. At the end of the last Passion summer Anton Lang, Andreas Lang, and Gregor Breitsamter went to Rome and had a private audience with the Pope. The following year Anton Lang made visits in England. I happened to be in England myself that summer, and wrote home one day from Liverpool :

"To-day I saw M—— R——, the fiancée of Anton Lang. When I inquired for the latter, she told me he had been in York on a visit. In answer to further inquiries I learned that while he was there he dined with the Archbishop of York, who was most kind to him. One day, when he and the Archbishop were coming out of York Minster, an old woman came and knelt at Anton Lang's feet and kissed his hand, saying, 'At last I have seen the Christ.'

"The Bishop of Durham also paid him much attention. In London he was taken to the House of Lords, and at the end of the session the members came down and crowded round him.

" 'I watched closely,' said M—— R——, 'to see if he was being spoiled. But I think he cannot be spoiled.' I too believe that he cannot be spoiled."

In 1902 they were married. (Fräulein Rutz had been in 1900 that Protecting Spirit of the Chorus, who sang so charmingly the Lament of the Bride of the Canticles.) They have three children, two boys and a girl, who will, as a matter of course, appear in the Play. Some months ago the boys were hoping to be good enough to be chosen to cry "Hosanna."

In the minds of the Oberammergauers, Mary possesses eternal youth; consequently a young unmarried woman is always chosen for the part. Anna Flunger, the beautiful Mary of 1900, was





ANNA, A VILLAGE CHILD, SINGING "HEIL DIR"



ANTON LANG AND HIS FAMILY



only nineteen years old. This year Ottilie Zwink, who has shown much talent in the practice plays, will be the Mary. Her photograph shows a lovely, sensitive face. She is the daughter of Johann Zwink, who this year will represent Judas for the third Passion season. His masterly interpretation of the character of Judas is an expression of dramatic art never to be forgotten.

Thomas Rendl, whose splendid personation of the part of Peter in 1900 moved every one who witnessed it, will this year appear as the venerable Simon of Bethany. In 1860 and 1870 he was Joseph of Arimathea and in 1880 and 1890 the Pilate. Photographs taken at those periods show his noble face and bearing, and accounts of the time speak of the distinction with which he filled those rôles. Peter Rendl, his son, has been chosen this year for Joseph of Arimathea, his father's former rôle. His sympathetic rendering of the character of John in 1890 and 1900 won much admiration. John will be represented this year by Alfred Bierling. The Caiaphas of 1910 will be Gregor Breitsamter, the vigorous and active priest Nathanael of the previous Passion summer.

Sebastian Lang, whose splendid presence and voice so well fitted him for the vehement and stirring Caiaphas of 1900, will this summer represent Annas. Andreas Lang, the strong Rabbi of

1900, and one of the most gifted men in Oberammergau, will be the Peter of this year. Wilhelm Rutz has, instead of his former part of Nicodemus, the character of the Rabbi, which he will undoubtedly fill with ability.

Maria Mayr has been chosen as Mary Magdalen, and Victoria Bauer as Martha. Hans Mayr, the son of Josef Mayr, will be the Herod of 1910.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PRODUCTION

**T**HE seven months of rehearsals, with all the elaborate and careful preparations, that the Play may be perfect down to the least detail, make it a tremendous undertaking. When added to this there is the care of perhaps three hundred thousand visitors, there is a strain on the nerves and strength of the villagers which only their wonderful poise and composure enable them to endure. As the Passion Play, however, is the supreme object of their lives, they are willing to make any sacrifice for it. This devotion is so strong that as the end of each decade draws near, the few who have made their homes in distant lands cannot resist the longing which draws them back to Oberammergau to take some part in the Play, if it be only to shout "Hosanna" with the crowd.

Since the presentation of the Passion Play is a religious observance, Sundays and Church festivals are chosen for the representations. The promise is made that if at any time there are more

visitors than the theatre will accommodate, the Play will be repeated the following day. Many times during the summer of 1900 the performers were obliged to give the Play three days in succession, and they gave the third rendering with the same reverence as the first.

The day before each performance, the visitors begin to come into the Valley and the streets of the little village are soon full of travellers from many parts of the earth. They pour in by rail and by carriage and on foot till the villagers know that there will be too many for even the after-performance. As we wander through the irregular streets we see amid the throngs of visitors stately men with long hair and hear, as they go by, excited whispers: "There is Caiaphas." "Is that John who just passed us?" "Do you think the one coming is the Christus?" "See that beautiful boy! I wonder if he takes part in the Play?" As no wigs or make-ups of any kind are allowed in the Passion Play, a few months before it is given the men and the boys of the village allow their hair to grow. (The day after the last performance of the summer there is a general village hair-cutting. The barber on this occasion literally wades almost knee-deep in wavy locks!)

At seven o'clock the evening before each performance, the village band marches through



ALFRED BIERLING, "ST. JOHN"



OTILIE ZWINK, THE "MARY"

the streets playing stirring music. At five-thirty the next morning the cannon sounds, and at six the church is filled with visitors and villagers for the celebration of high mass. At half-past seven another cannon-boom announces the opening of the doors of the Passion theatre. The streets are immediately filled with hurrying, excited people. As there is no occasion for haste, we will let the crowd slip by while we enjoy the fresh, pure morning air. The bright sunshine, the blue sky, the green meadows, and the clear rugged outlines of the mountains are a fitting setting for the scenes we are about to witness.

In the few moments before the play begins we have an opportunity to examine the stage. We have before us the broad proscenium, which has no roof, thus giving it a background of sky and mountain. At the rear of the proscenium in the centre is a small covered stage with curtains on which are painted Michel Angelo's Moses, and the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. This stage is used for the tableaux and some of the small though important scenes. Two arches, through which are seen streets of Jerusalem winding away in the distance, join this central stage. On the right is the Palace of Annas, on the left the Palace of Pilate. At each side of the proscenium is a covered colonnade through which the Chorus of Schutzgeister, or Protecting Spirits, comes out.



The office of the Chorus is similar to that of the Greek Chorus, to explain and to comment on the scenes that are about to take place.

The Passion Play, which begins with the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem and ends with the Resurrection and Ascension, has seventeen acts, each one of which is preceded by one or two tableaux, representing scenes from the Old Testament, foreshadowing the action from the Gospel narrative which follows. Father Daisenberger explains the relation of the tableaux to the action of the Play, in a little book published at Oberammergau, as follows: "Our object is to represent the story of Christ's Passion, not by a mere statement of facts, but in its connection with the types and figures and prophecies of the Old Testament. By this manner of treatment an additional strong light will be cast upon the sacred narrative; and the thoughtful spectator will be able to realize the grand truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man for our salvation, is the central figure of the inspired volumes." The relation of these types or tableaux to the Play is explained by the Chorus of Protecting Spirits and also by the Prologus, who recites melodramatic verses embodying the thought given in song by the Chorus.

# THE PRODUCTION

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## NAMES OF THE PLAYERS

	1910	1900
Christus . . . . .	<i>Anton Lang</i>	<i>Anton Lang.</i>
Mary . . . . .	<i>Ottilie Zwink</i>	<i>Anna Flunger.</i>
Peter . . . . .	<i>Andreas Lang</i>	<i>Thomas Rendl.</i>
John . . . . .	<i>Albrecht Bierling</i>	<i>Peter Rendl.</i>
Judas . . . . .	<i>Johann Zwink</i>	<i>Johann Zwink.</i>
Caiaphas . . . . .	<i>Gregor Breitsamter</i>	<i>Sebastian Lang.</i>
Annas . . . . .	<i>Sebastian Lang</i>	<i>Martin Oppenrieder.</i>
Pilate . . . . .	<i>Sebastian Bauer</i>	<i>Sebastian Bauer.</i>
Nathanael . . . . .	<i>Rupert Breitsamter</i>	<i>Gregor Breitsamter.</i>
Rabbi . . . . .	<i>Wilhelm Rutz</i>	<i>Andreas Lang.</i>
Joseph of Arimathea . . . . .	<i>Peter Rendl</i>	<i>Andreas Braun.</i>
Nicodemus . . . . .	<i>Wilhelm Lang</i>	<i>Wilhelm Rutz.</i>
Simon of Bethany . . . . .	<i>Thomas Rendl</i>	<i>Franz Steinbacher.</i>
Mary Magdalen . . . . .	<i>Maria Mayr</i>	<i>Bertha Wolf.</i>
Martha . . . . .	<i>Victoria Bauer</i>	<i>Maria Schwalb.</i>
Lazarus . . . . .	<i>Richard Lang</i>	<i>Otto Lang.</i>
Herod . . . . .	<i>Hans Mayr</i>	<i>Rochus Lang.</i>
Nine Remaining Disciples :		
James . . . . .	<i>Mathias Dedler</i>	<i>Mathias Dedler.</i>
Matthew . . . . .	<i>Josef Albrecht</i>	<i>Josef Albrecht.</i>
Philip . . . . .	<i>Andreas Braun</i>	<i>Tobias Zwink.</i>
Bartholomew . . . . .	<i>Balthasar Keller</i>	<i>Josef Rutz.</i>
Thomas . . . . .	<i>Anton Mayr</i>	<i>Anton Mayr.</i>
Andrew . . . . .	<i>Alois Gerold</i>	<i>Alois Gerold.</i>
James, the Less . . . . .	<i>Benedict Klucker</i>	<i>Benedict Klucker.</i>
Thaddeus . . . . .	<i>Josef Kurz</i>	<i>Josef Kurz.</i>
Simon . . . . .	<i>Martin Hohenleitner</i>	<i>Martin Hohenleitner.</i>
Simon of Cyrene . . . . .	<i>Andreas Kratz</i>	<i>Jakob Bierling.</i>
Roman Captain . . . . .	<i>Anton Hauser</i>	<i>Anton Bartl.</i>
Director of the Play . . . . .	<i>Ludwig Lang</i>	<i>Johann Lang.</i>
Ass't. Director of Play . . . . .	<i>Hans Mayr</i>	<i>Ludwig Lang.</i>
Leader of Chorus . . . . .	<i>Jakob Rutz</i>	<i>Jakob Rutz.</i>
Prologus . . . . .	<i>Anton Lechner</i>	<i>Josef Mayr.</i>
Business Manager . . . . .	<i>Franz Rutz</i>	<i>Franz Rutz.</i>

There are in all five hundred and seventy-four performers, seventy-six musicians, and fifty others connected with the Play, about seven hundred in all.

## DAYS OF THE REPRESENTATIONS

May 11, 16, 22, 29.

June 5, 12, 19, 24, 26, 29.

July 3, 10, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31.

August 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28, 31.

September 4, 8, 11, 18, 25.

Certain regulations for 1900 will probably be little changed in 1910. The principal ones are :

1. To wear only the lowest possible head coverings or none at all.

2. Demonstrations of any kind are prohibited, as applause and exclamations mar the solemnity of the performance.

3. No one is permitted to stand during the scenes, and no one will be allowed to leave the auditorium from the commencement of the scene of the crucifixion until the end of the Play.

4. No cameras of any description will be admitted ; any infraction of this rule will bring prosecution.

5. In the theatre itself and for a distance of twenty metres (about sixty-five feet) from the theatre, smoking is strictly prohibited.

Opera glasses will be found of great service.

(Coming in late, objectionable anywhere, is at the Passion Play almost a sacrilege, in view of the supreme solemnity of what it interrupts, both on the stage and in the minds of devout spectators.)



HOUSE OF ANTON LANG



PASSION THEATRE, LOOKING FROM STAGE

The paintings on the wall in the rear, over the arch, show, at left, the Passion Play in 1634; at right, the old Monastery of Ettal, burned in 1744.

## THE PASSION PLAY

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### PRELUDE

*Chorus of Protecting Spirits. The  
Choragus intones.*

TABLEAU 1. Adam and Eve driven from Paradise. Symbolic of the fall of man.

### PROLOGUS

Greetings to you all who have come from far and near to witness the sufferings and death of Christ. All here are united in love, in memory of the One who for us suffered bitterest death. Our tenderest thoughts and love turn to Him. The hour for the fulfilment of our holy vow has now come; join your prayers with ours we beseech you.

TABLEAU 2. The adoration of the cross. Symbolic of the redemption of man.

### FIRST DIVISION

*From Christ's entry into Jerusalem to the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.*

## REPRESENTATION I

*Action.* Jesus enters Jerusalem amid the loud rejoicings of the people, drives the buyers and sellers from the Temple, goes again to Bethany.

SCENE 1. Jesus enters Jerusalem.

SCENE 2. Jesus drives the merchants from the Temple and answers the questions of the Pharisees.

SCENE 3. The Priest Nathanael incites the people against Jesus.

SCENE 4. Nathanael promises revenge to the merchants.

At eight o'clock the cannon sounds, and immediately soft, beautiful strains come from the orchestra. The curtain divides, part rises and part sinks beneath the stage, disclosing another curtain of rich hues. If we could look beyond this drapery we should see all the performers, about six hundred, saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Before the opening music ceases the Protecting Spirits, thirty-four in number, walk slowly and with impressive dignity from the colonnades to the stage. They form a beautiful line of color as they stand there, both men and women wearing golden crowns and clad in white tunics and flowing mantles of different hues. The Prologus in a white robe richly embroidered in gold stands in the centre. Josef Mayr, the Prologus of 1900,



**THE STAGE, WITH CHORUS OF PROTECTING SPIRITS**  
 Proscenium is open to the stage, centre of stage is covered. Through  
 gateways are seen streets of Jerusalem. At right, palace of Annas;  
 at left, palace of Pilate.

with his tall, majestic figure and stately mode of utterance made the office most impressive. The Choragus opens the Play by an intoned explanation of the object of the representation, to show "how the human race became reconciled to God through the blood of His only-begotten Son," the two tableaux being symbolic of the fall and the redemption of man. The words of greeting from the Prologus indicate the spirit in which the Play is given. After the Chorus explain the second tableau they leave the stage with solemn and dignified mien.

Joyful cries are heard in the distance. As they come nearer and grow louder they are accompanied by shouts of "Hosanna!" as from a great multitude of people. Soon they appear ever increasing in number winding down the slope from the Mount of Olives, children waving palm branches, men and women in oriental costumes of beautiful soft colors. They are all rejoicing and singing songs of praise. As they look back singing "*Heil dir! Heil dir! O David's Sohn!*" "Hail to thee! hail to thee! O Son of David," — in their midst, riding an ass and surrounded by his Disciples, comes the familiar form of the Christus. His robe is of soft heliotrope and crimson. His face and figure are typical, expressing strength and gentleness. As he advances through the crowd his hand is raised as in bless-



ing. While the happy throng sing their song of praise the Christus dismounts so gently we scarcely perceive the motion. As the crowd separate, he approaches the Temple, in the courts of which the money-changers and merchants are sitting. When he sees them he stops in astonishment, then advances with dignity and in a tone of sadness and indignation addresses them: "What see I here? Is my Father's house thus dishonored? Is this the house of God or is it a market-place? How can strangers, who come from the land of the heathen, worship God amid a throng of money-changers? And you priests, guardians of the Temple, you can look on this abomination and endure it! Woe be unto you! He who searches the heart knows why you encourage such disorder."

The crowd listen in breathless silence. The merchants ask, "Who is this man?" "He is the great prophet from Nazareth in Galilee," answer the people as with a single voice.

As the Christus goes toward the merchants, ordering them from the Temple, the Pharisees question his authority. He replies: "There is room enough for your business outside the Temple. 'My house,' says the Lord, 'shall be called a House of Prayer for all the nations,' but you have made it a den of robbers. Away with all this!" With a quick, vigorous movement he



THE CHRISTUS, 1900, 1910

Anton Lang was twenty-five years old when he first enacted the part.



overturns the money-tables; he also releases the doves, which fly away to their homes. As the merchants begin their lamentations, he seizes a rope, lying near, of which he makes a scourge of cords, and holding it on high, drives the merchants from the Temple,—more, however, by the dignified authority of his manner than by any actual motion against them.

After answering the remonstrances and questions of the Pharisees, he goes into the Temple, followed by many of the people. The priests intercept those that remain and call upon them to be true to the law of Moses and the prophets. These are joined by the merchants, who come back calling for revenge. This is promised them by the Pharisees, who talk to the people with such insistence that with the fickleness of a great crowd they, who a few moments before were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" go off with the excited merchants, crying: "Moses is our prophet, our lawgiver! Away with all others!"

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## REPRESENTATION II

### *The Plot of the High Council*

TABLEAU. The sons of Jacob resolve to destroy their younger brother, Joseph. *Genesis* xxxvii. 18. The foreshadowing of the plot of the Sanhedrim against Christ.

*Action.* The high priests and scribes take council how to get Jesus into their power. Meeting of the Sanhedrim, or High Council.

SCENE 1. The High Council resolve on the seizure of Christ.

SCENE 2. Caiaphas encourages the High Council.

SCENE 3. Nathanael brings in the traders.

SCENE 4. Annas blesses the High Council.

As the curtain parts we see the Jewish Sanhedrim, an assembly of the priests of the Synagogue. They are all clad in rich vestments, those of the presiding high priest, Caiaphas, being white, embroidered with gold. On his head he wears a white jewelled mitre and on his breast a square shield or breast-plate containing twelve precious stones with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. He opens the discussion with vehemence. Some of the priests recount the things they have all suffered at Christ's hands: his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the driving of the merchants from the Temple; his disregard of Moses and the prophets. They tell how the people turn from them and run after him, and declare that their only safeguard is to imprison him; but they conclude that it would be dangerous to try to seize him when he is surrounded by people. After deliberating how to get him into their power, they

decide to offer a reward to the merchants, who are now brought in from the outer court where they have been waiting to present their grievances to the High Council. They tell how the Galilean has driven them with a scourge, overturned their money-tables, and spilled their oil, and they demand satisfaction. This is promised them by the Sanhedrim. They eagerly agree to find out Christ's nightly stopping-place, and one of them says he knows a follower of Jesus who he thinks, for a sufficient reward, would betray his Master.

Annas, another high priest, enjoins strict silence, which the traders swear to keep. Then Caiaphas says, "My friends, if you wish fully to satisfy your feeling of revenge, you will spare no pains in enkindling in others the same holy zeal that inspires you." They reply that they will not rest till the whole people are turned against Jesus, and go out, crying, "Our life for the law of Moses and the Holy Sanhedrim."

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### REPRESENTATION III

#### *The Farewell at Bethany*

TABLEAU I. The young Tobias taking leave of his parents before starting on a journey.  
*Tobias* v. 32.

TABLEAU 2. The Bride of the Canticles lamenting the absent bridegroom. *Song of Solomon* vi.

Both tableaux foreshadow the parting at Bethany.

*Action.* Christ at Bethany is anointed by Mary Magdalen, whereupon Judas grumbles. Christ says farewell to his Mother and to the friends at Bethany.

SCENE 1. Christ and his Disciples approach Bethany.

SCENE 2. Christ welcomed by Simon, Lazarus, Martha and Mary Magdalen.

SCENE 3. A room in Simon's house. Mary anoints the feet of Christ.

SCENE 4. Christ bids farewell to the friends at Bethany.

SCENE 5. Christ's parting from his Mother.

At this time Jesus was in the habit of leaving the crowded city at sunset. He often went with his Disciples to Bethany, to Simon, the leper, and also Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. There he stayed until morning and then returned to Jerusalem.

We see him and his followers approaching Bethany. Jesus says to them: "You know, dear Disciples, that the feast of the Passover will take place after two days. Therefore let us make a



MARY, 1900  
Anna Flunger, now married.



last visit to our friends in Bethany and afterward go to Jerusalem, where in these last days all will be fulfilled which has been written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man." He foretells the manner of his death, but the Disciples, believing that the Messiah will remain forever, cannot grasp the meaning of his words.

As they draw near the village, their friends come out to meet them. Simon hastens forward. "Best of teachers, welcome. What joy that thou hast not scorned my invitation and dost honor my house with thy presence ! My friends, welcome to you all." After greetings from the others, they all go in. As they sit at table, Mary Magdalen, whom the Oberammergauers make identical with Mary the sister of Martha, anoints Christ's feet with precious ointment, saying in a pleading tone "Rabbi." Christ answers tenderly and compassionately, "Mary." The Disciples comment indignantly and Judas breaks out into open remonstrance, saying that the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor. "Let her alone," says Jesus, as they begin to find fault with her ; "why are you troubling her? This is a beautiful deed that she has done for me. You always have the poor with you and whenever you wish you can do good to them ; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could ; she has perfumed my body beforehand for

my burial. And I tell you, wherever in the whole world the Good News is proclaimed, what this woman has done will be told in memory of her."

He thanks Simon for his hospitality, and as they all accompany him he turns and says to Simon and the others: "Remain here, dear friends. Once more farewell! Dear tranquil Bethany, I shall never more linger in thy peaceful valley!" As he says "Farewell," and turns to go, he meets Mary and her companions. The scene which follows, the parting between Jesus and his Mother, is deeply touching. She hastens to her son, saying: "Jesus! dearest Son! With longing have I hastened with my friends to see thee once more before thou goest, ah!"

Jesus tells her that he is going to Jerusalem, that he is ready to complete the sacrifice which the Father demands from him. Her intuition tells her what that sacrifice will be, and she begs to be allowed to go to Jerusalem with him. He tells her that after two days she may come with the friends at Bethany, to whose care he commends her in the meantime. Mary is dressed, as in old paintings of the Madonna, in light blue and soft old rose, with a white head drapery.

## REPRESENTATION IV

*The Last Going to Jerusalem*

TABLEAU. King Ahasuerus rejects Vashti and exalts Esther. *Esther* i., ii. Vashti's fate foreshadows that of the Synagogue.

*Action.* Christ returns with his Disciples to Jerusalem, weeps over the city. He sends two of the Disciples ahead to prepare the Pass-over lamb. Judas conceives the thought of betraying his Master.

SCENE 1. Christ laments over Jerusalem, foretells his own death, sends Peter and John on into the city to prepare the Passover lamb.

SCENE 2. Judas asks Jesus to provide for the Disciples before he leaves them.

SCENE 3. Judas, remaining behind, decides to leave his Master.

SCENE 4. Dathan, the Temple merchant, approaches Judas.

SCENE 5. The other traders finish the bribery. Judas agrees to betray Christ.

SCENE 6. Judas, alone, wrestles with his conscience.

SCENE 7. Peter and John at the house of Mark.

As the little band approaches Jerusalem, Jesus weeps over the fate of the proud city. The Disciples ask what that fate will be and beg him not

to go there. After answering them Christ sends Peter and John ahead with instructions to follow a man whom they will meet carrying a jug of water, and to say to the goodman of the house that he enters, "The Master saith, 'Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my Disciples?'" Judas, who is still disturbed over Mary Magdalen's waste of the three hundred pence, showing the Master the empty purse, urges him, if he is going to leave the Disciples, to make some provision for them. "O Judas," replies Jesus, "trouble not thyself more than is needful," and turning away he and the others go on to the city.

Judas remains behind and in an agitated soliloquy reveals his struggles of mind. He has just decided to break with his Master when he is found by Dathan and the other Temple merchants. After a time he agrees for a large reward to reveal Christ's nightly abiding-place. When the traders leave, he once more tries to justify his course to himself, but he cannot forget his Master's goodness to him. He tries to quiet his uneasy conscience by the hope that Jesus will use his miraculous powers to free himself from his enemies. Judas decides, in this event, to throw himself at his Master's feet for forgiveness. "I have never known him to drive the penitent from him."



**LEADER OF THE CHORUS, 1890, 1900, 1910**  
**Jakob Rutz, father of Frau Anton Lang.**

The last scene shows John and Peter meeting Baruch with the pitcher and entering the house of Mark.

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## REPRESENTATION V

*The Lord's Supper*

**TABLEAU 1.** The Lord sends manna to the Israelites in the wilderness. *Exodus xvi.*

**TABLEAU 2.** The grapes brought by the spies from Canaan. *Numbers xviii.*

Both tableaux foreshadow the Last Supper.

*Action.* Jesus celebrates with his Disciples the last Passover and institutes the Supper for a new covenant in his memory.

**SCENE 1.** Christ and the Twelve around a table in the house of Mark. Christ washes the feet of the Disciples. He institutes the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

**SCENE 2.** When Peter swears his loyalty, Jesus foretells his denial.

The Tableau "Manna in the Wilderness" is one of the most beautiful in the whole Passion Play. It includes more than four hundred people, nearly one-half of them being children. They are arranged with great artistic skill, the children in the foreground. Every pose is natural. All eyes and

hands are turned toward the manna, which falls continuously from Heaven.

After the chorus have left the stage the curtains part to show Christ and his Disciples around the table in the house of Mark. Christ says: "With longing have I wished to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you from this time I shall not eat again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." Then taking the cup he continues, "Father, I thank thee for this drink of the vine." After drinking and handing it to the disciples, he adds, "Take this and share it among you, for I say to you I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come." His companions, interpreting him in an earthly sense, ask which of them shall be first in that Kingdom. In answer Christ asks the host for water and a towel, then washes the feet of the Disciples. It is done with entire self-forgetfulness and simplicity. The only sound that breaks the almost breathless silence is the singing of two verses of a beautiful hymn by the invisible chorus of angels. He blesses the bread and puts a morsel into the mouth of each of the Disciples. He then blesses the wine, and he passes it to each of the Twelve, who, with the exception of Judas, receive it with lowered eyes and clasped hands. Not only they, but also the vast assembly of onlookers, seem to be taking part in that solemn service. As Dean

Stanley wrote, "It is probable that a more impressive communion service, impressive from its simplicity, has never been witnessed since the first great inauguration." Many of the audience sit with tears pouring down their faces, so reverently and tenderly and with such gentle dignity is it all portrayed.

When Christ says, "The hand of my betrayer is with me at the table," they are all startled. As soon as Judas discovers that Christ knows his guilt, he hurries from the room. When Judas has gone, Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man has been exalted and God has been exalted through him: and God will exalt him with himself—yes, he will exalt him forthwith. My children, I am to be with you but a little longer."

In answer to Peter's assertion that he will lay down his life for him, Jesus replies, "In truth I tell you the cock will not crow twice till you have denied me three times." Christ comes forward and remains in deep thought, with his face turned toward Heaven; turning, and seeing the troubled look on the faces of his followers, he says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's home there are many dwellings and I am going to prepare a place for you. I shall return and take you to be with me that you may be where I am. Peace be with you. My own peace I give



to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Keep my command. This is my command, that you love one another as I have loved you. I shall not talk with you much more, for the spirit that is ruling the world is coming that the world may see that I love the Father and that I do as the Father commands me. Come, let us be going."

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## REPRESENTATION VI

### *The Betrayer*

**TABLEAU.** The sons of Jacob sell their brother for twenty pieces of silver. *Genesis xxxvii. 29.*

**Action.** Judas comes to the Sanhedrim, and promises for thirty pieces of silver to deliver his Master into the hands of the Pharisees. They resolve on the death of Christ.

**SCENE 1.** The Sanhedrim. Caiaphas orders Judas to be brought in.

**SCENE 2.** Judas receives the price of betrayal.

**SCENE 3.** After Judas goes out, the Council condemns Christ to death.

**SCENE 4.** The members of the Council decide to go through the form of a trial.

Caiaphas, presiding in a meeting of the Sanhedrim, tells the priests and Pharisees that the



**THE LORD'S SUPPER**  
Arrangement is taken from Da Vinci's painting.

zealous Israelite has found a follower of the Galilean, who will lead them to him by night. They send for Judas, who, in answer to the questions of the Pharisees, says that his friendship for his Master has cooled. He then asks what reward they will give him for leading them to Christ. As the Rabbi gives him the thirty pieces of silver, he counts them, testing each piece. The High Council promises him an armed band to surround Jesus and his followers.

After he has gone out there is a stormy discussion in the Sanhedrim. The priests condemn Jesus to death against the vehement protests of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who finally leave the Council, swearing that they will not remain where the innocent are condemned. The Council decides that it will be necessary to sit in formal judgment on "this man" and to provide witnesses, but that the sentence must be carried out at any cost.

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## REPRESENTATION VII

### *Christ on the Mount of Olives*

**TABEAU 1.** Adam condemned to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. *Genesis* iii. 19.  
Typical of Christ's bloody sweat.

**TABEAU 2.** Joab, under the pretext of giving Amasa a friendly kiss, thrusts his sword

through Amasa's body. 2 *Samuel* xx. 9.  
The treachery of Judas.

*Action.* Christ suffers bitter agony, is betrayed by Judas with a kiss, is seized by the soldiers and led away.

SCENE 1. Judas appears in the neighborhood of the Mount of Olives, accompanied by priests and soldiers.

SCENE 2. Christ prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

SCENE 3. An angel comforts him.

SCENE 4. Judas betrays his Master with a kiss.

Judas, four priests, the merchants, the armed band, and a crowd of people pass by on their way to the Mount of Olives. Judas tells them to observe the one whom he kisses, for that will be the Master.

Christ and the Twelve now enter the Garden of Gethsemane. The Master takes Peter, John, and James apart, saying: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Tarry ye here and watch with me." Going a little farther he falls on his face and prays, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done." He comes back to the three, and finding them asleep asks them if they cannot watch one hour. As they promise that they will pray and watch, he looks at them



SCHUTZGEIST, ONE OF THE CHORUS OF PROTECTING SPIRITS  
Mathilde Rutz, now wife of Anton Lang.



tenderly, saying : " The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He goes away and prays again, and once more he finds them sleeping. While he prays a third time in anguish, weighed down by the sins of the world, a shining angel appears, and gives him a message of comfort and courage from the Father.

As he comes to the sleeping three, the clash of arms is heard and the Disciples hastily gather round their Master. They see a crowd approaching. Judas comes forward out of the darkness and, kissing Jesus, says, " Hail, Master ! " The latter replies : " Friend, wherefore art thou come ? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ? " and turning to the crowd, " Whom seek you ? " In answer to their cry, " Jesus of Nazareth," he says, " I am he." The soldiers fall to the ground crying, " Woe unto us, what is this ? " Christ bids them " Arise, have no fear." As they come forward, Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus. After telling his followers to desist, Christ touches the ear of Malchus and heals it.

While Christ is being bound by the soldiers, his Disciples disappear in the crowd. Up to this time we have always seen him attended by the Twelve. Now one of them has given him over to his enemies and the others have deserted him.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PRODUCTION (*Continued*)

**N**OW at noontime comes a pause of two hours. At the end of the intermission another warning boom of the cannon announces the continuance of the Play.

### SECOND DIVISION

*From the Arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane to the Sentence by Pilate.*

### REPRESENTATION VIII

#### *Jesus before Annas*

**TABLEAU.** Micaiah, the prophet, receives a blow on the cheek because he reveals the truth to King Ahab. *1 Kings xxii. 24.*

*Action.* Jesus is brought before Annas and is struck in the face.

**SCENE 1.** Annas in great excitement awaits the arrival of Jesus at his palace.

**SCENE 2.** Judas is filled with horror to learn that Jesus has been condemned to death.





**THE SANHEDRIM**

Scene showing Judas receiving the thirty pieces of silver.

SCENE 3. Jesus before Annas receives a blow on the cheek.

SCENE 4. The soldiers lead Jesus away, making mockery of him.

SCENE 5. Peter and John seeking tidings of the Master.

After the Protecting Spirits have left the stage, we see Annas on the balcony of his palace impatiently awaiting the news of the capture of Jesus. He sends his servants to find out what has taken place.

Soon the four priests and Judas come, and when Annas learns that Christ has been seized, he says to Judas: "Judas, thy name shall have an honorable place in our annals. Before the feast shall the Galilean die." "Die?" says Judas, greatly moved. "I did not deliver him to you for that." He hastens away, overcome with bitter remorse.

Christ is now led to the balcony of Annas, who questions him about his teachings. Jesus remains for some time silent, finally saying: "I have always taught openly in the synagogue and the temple. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me. They know what I have said." At this Balbus strikes him in the face and he is led away.

Peter and John approach the house, greatly disturbed at not finding their Master.

## REPRESENTATION IX

*Jesus before Caiaphas*

TABLEAU 1. The innocent Naboth is condemned to death by false witnesses. *1 Kings xxi. 13.*

TABLEAU 2. Job endures many insults from his wife and his friends. *Job ii. 9.*

*Action.* Christ is led to Caiaphas, is examined by him and pronounced worthy of death, is denied by Peter, is mocked and abused by the servants.

SCENE 1. The soldiers with rough jokes lead Christ through the streets.

SCENE 2. Bedroom of Caiaphas. Caiaphas, priests, and Pharisees.

SCENE 3. False witnesses testifying against Christ. Caiaphas condemns him to death.

SCENE 4. Caiaphas orders a meeting of the High Council.

SCENE 5. Judas, driven up and down by anguish, comes to the house of Caiaphas.

SCENE 6. The Hall of the Palace of Caiaphas. Peter's denial.

SCENE 7. Peter's repentance.

SCENE 8. The soldiers mock Christ.

We hear shouts and laughter. A crowd of people come down the street surrounding the

noble figure of Christ, who is driven by the insulting, mocking soldiers to the house of Caiaphas. An assembly of priests and Pharisees gathered there are excitedly preparing for a semblance of a trial. When Christ is brought in, the false witnesses come forward and testify against him. When they have finished Caiaphas questions Jesus, who remains silent until finally asked, "Art thou the Messiah, the Son of the living God?" He replies: "Thou hast said it and I am. Nevertheless I say unto you: hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God in power and coming in the clouds of the heaven." Caiaphas rends his garment in wrath and indignation at the blasphemy of these words and asks: "What further need of witnesses? Ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" With one accord they reply, "He is worthy of death."

They agree to have the sentence confirmed by the Sanhedrim in the morning and then to obtain Pilate's permission to carry it out.

Judas approaches the palace of Annas. "I am driven about by anxious forebodings! The words of Annas, 'He must die'—oh, these words pursue me and torment me wherever I go!—No! no! they would not push it as far as that. It would be horrible—horrible,—if they should put my Master to death—and I—I—guilty of it!—No! It cannot go as far as that. They have no reason

for it. In the house of Caiaphas here I can ask his fate."

The soldiers have been waiting in a hall of the palace. Peter comes in, ostensibly to warm himself, but really to obtain news of his Master. One of the servants recognizes him and asks him if he is not one of the disciples of the Man of Galilee. Then follow the three denials, and Peter, recalling with grief the words of his Master at the Last Supper, is about to go away when Christ is brought in. The latter looks with sorrow at Peter, who holds out his hands appealingly, and as the Master is led away by the soldiers, covers his face. He goes out into the street weeping bitterly. "O dearest Master! How far have I fallen! I, weak, miserable man! I have denied thee, three times denied thee, my best friend and teacher, for whom I promised to go even unto death!" But he recalls the compassionate look his Master gave him and feels that he will be forgiven. He goes away, saying, "The whole love of my heart shall from this moment belong to thee and bind me close to thee, and nothing shall ever have the power to separate me from thee." As Peter disappears, John comes seeking him.

We now see Christ in prison bound and mocked and buffeted by the soldiers. He maintains his lofty dignity throughout the harrowing scene.



**PETER, 1900**

**As represented by Thomas Rendl, who in 1910 is "Simon of Bethany."**



## REPRESENTATION X

*The Despair of Judas*

TABLEAU. Cain, tortured by the pangs of conscience, wanders up and down the earth.  
*Genesis* iv. 10-17.

*Action.* The High Council confirms the death sentence already pronounced on Christ. Judas, full of repentance, comes to the Council, throws down the thirty pieces of silver, and driven by despair goes away and hangs himself.

SCENE 1. Judas, driven to and fro by ever-increasing anguish of spirit.

SCENE 2. A meeting of the High Council.

SCENE 3. Judas upbraids the Council and casts the money at their feet.

SCENE 4. The Council decide to buy the potter's field with the money.

SCENE 5. Christ before the Council.

SCENE 6. The three messengers of the Council before the House of Pilate.

SCENE 7. The end of Judas.

Judas appears wrestling with the pangs of remorse and despair, and says: "So has my anguished foreboding become a horrible certainty. Caiaphas has condemned the Master to death and the Council has agreed to the sentence. It is



over ;—no hope of a pardon. If the Master had wished to save himself, he would have made his power felt a second time in the Garden of Gethsemane. As he did not do it then, he will never do it. What can I do for him—I, the unhappy one, who have delivered him over into their hands?" He goes off, saying, "O, the pains of hell torture my inmost soul!"

As the Sanhedrim sit making further plans, Judas rushes in and asks: "Is it true? Have you condemned my Master to death?" A Rabbi speaks: "Why do you thrust yourself uncalled into this assembly? Out from here! We will call you when we need you." Judas insists: "I must know it! Have you sentenced him?" "He must die," they all answer. Judas upbraids the Sanhedrim and is told to leave the council-chamber. "I demand the release of the innocent. My hands shall be free from his blood." "What!" answers the Rabbi. "Thou shameless traitor! Thou wilt dictate to the Holy Sanhedrim? Know then, thy master must die and thou hast delivered him to death!" Almost mechanically, as if stunned, he drops to the floor and with vacant look repeats the Rabbi's words. "He must die? I am a traitor? I have delivered him to death." Suddenly breaking into a frenzy of rage and despair, he cries, "Then may ten thousand devils from hell tear me to pieces, crush



JUDAS, 1890, 1900, 1910  
Johann Zwink, father of the "Mary" of 1910.

me!" He flings the accursed blood-money at their feet and cursing them rushes from the council-chamber.

The High Council, relieved by his departure, decide, since the money is blood-money and cannot be returned to the treasury, to use it to buy the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

Jesus is now brought before the Sanhedrim. Again they question him and ask him if he is the Son of God. Again he answers, "Ye say it and I am." They shudder at this blasphemy and unanimously exclaim, "He must die!" But Pilate must ratify their decision; so they send the Rabbi and two other members of the Council to announce their coming. When the three reach the palace of Pilate they cannot accept the servant's invitation to enter, as it is against the law for them to go into a Gentile's house at the time of the Passover. Pilate sends them word that he will listen to the petition of the High Council.

Now follows the last act in the life of Judas. He appears in a wood, and in a wonderful soliloquy, shows the depth and bitterness of his repentance. The memory of his Master's love and goodness, forgotten during the time of temptation, now almost overwhelms him. His crime is too great. He will end his accursed life. He tears the girdle from his waist and is about to hang himself as the curtain falls.

## REPRESENTATION XI

*Christ before Pilate*

TABLEAU. Daniel falsely accused before King Darius. *Daniel* vi. 4.

*Action.* Christ is taken to Pilate, before whom the priests make their accusations. Pilate declares him innocent and orders him to be taken to Herod.

SCENE 1. Priests, traders, witnesses, and soldiers take Christ to Pilate.

SCENE 2. Quintus, Pilate's servant, interviews them.

SCENE 3. The priests make their accusations to Pilate.

SCENE 4. Christ and Pilate.

SCENE 5. Pilate receives a message from his wife.

SCENE 6. Pilate talks with his courtiers.

SCENE 7. Pilate orders the priests to take Christ to King Herod.

Caiaphas, Annas, the priests, Pharisees, traders and witnesses appear surrounding Christ, who is led by Selpha and followed by a throng of people. Pilate interviews them from his balcony. As he does not consider the reasons given by the High Council for the death sentence to be sufficient, he orders Christ brought up on the balcony and after questioning him finds him without blame. As Jesus is saying that he came into the



PILATE, 1900, 1910

Sebastian Bauer, burgomaster of Oberammergau in 1910.



world to bear witness to the truth, and Pilate asks, "What is truth?" they are interrupted by a messenger from Pilate's wife. She sends him word to have nothing to do with "that just person" as she "has suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

Pilate summons the high priests, and believing that their accusations are prompted only by envy and jealousy, he refuses to pass the death sentence. The Pharisees, however, are insistent; but when Pilate discovers that Jesus is from Nazareth, which is in the jurisdiction of King Herod, he sends them to him.

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## REPRESENTATION XII

### *Christ before Herod*

**TABLEAU.** Samson makes sport for the Philistines. *Judges* xvi. 25.

**Action.** Herod treats Christ with mockery and derision and sends him back to Pilate.

**SCENE 1.** Herod and his court await Christ with curiosity.

**SCENE 2.** Herod questions and ridicules Christ.

**SCENE 3.** Herod refuses to pronounce the death sentence and sends the priests back to Pilate.

**SCENE 4.** Herod and his courtiers.

Herod, clad in scarlet, with a golden crown and sceptre, is seated on his throne talking with his

courtiers and awaiting the arrival of Jesus. He does not mean to pass sentence on Christ, but only to try his miracle-working powers, of which he has heard such marvellous reports.

Caiaphas and the other priests come in, followed by Jesus led by Herod's soldiers. Herod is flattered to learn that Pilate has sent them to him for judgment. He asks Christ to interpret a dream, to perform some miracle. "Cause it to become suddenly dark in this hall! Or—raise thyself and walk before us without touching the floor, or change the roll which contains thy death sentence into a serpent." As Christ makes no response to these demands, Herod orders a white robe to be brought and placed upon the silent, majestic figure, and mockingly hails him as king. He commands the soldiers to lead him away. The priests demand the death sentence. Herod refuses to give it and sends them full of anger back to Pilate.

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### REPRESENTATION XIII

#### *The scourging and crowning with thorns*

TABLEAU 1. Joseph's blood-stained coat brought to the Patriarch Jacob. *Genesis xxxvii. 32.*

TABLEAU 2. The ram appointed for sacrifice in place of Isaac. *Genesis xxii. 13.*



*Action.* Christ is led once more before Pilate, who offers the choice between Christ and Barabbas and orders Christ to be scourged.

SCÈNE 1. Priests, Pharisees, traders, and Christ led by Roman soldiers, approach the house of Pilate.

SCÈNE 2. Pilate says the people shall choose between Christ and Barabbas and promises that the former shall be scourged.

SCÈNE 3. Caiaphas exhorts the merchants to incite the people against Christ.

SCÈNE 4. Christ is scourged and crowned with thorns.

Again he is dragged back to Pilate, always attended by the priests, Pharisees, merchants, witnesses, and a guard of soldiers. They determine to force Pilate to pass sentence. He still tries to evade their demand and promises to have Jesus scourged. He finally tells them that when, according to custom, the people assemble there to beg the release of a prisoner, he will allow them to choose between Christ and Barabbas.

As Pilate goes in, Caiaphas speaks: "Pilate calls for the voice of the people. Well, we also call for it." Then to the merchants and witnesses: "Now, brave Israelites, your time has come. Go into the streets of Jerusalem, summon your friends to come here. Gather them in great crowds,

kindle in them the most glowing hatred against the enemy of Moses." As they all hurry away, they cry: "Free Barabbas! To the cross with the Galilean!"

We have seen Jesus, his hands bound behind his back, dragged from one tribunal to another. He has been mocked and buffeted and cruelly treated by the soldiers. Now they have led him to be scourged. As the curtains part, the blows cease. They set him on a rude prison stool, they crown him with a crown of thorns and put a scarlet robe on him and hail him in derision as their king. Throughout the whole scene he shows no trace of anger but bears the insults with sorrowful dignity.

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#### REPRESENTATION XIV

*Christ is condemned to die on the cross*

TABLEAU 1. Joseph is placed before the people as ruler. *Genesis* xli. 41.

TABLEAU 2. Casting lots over the two goats, one to be a sin-offering, the other a scape-goat. *Leviticus* xvi. 7.

*Action.* Pilate places the scourged and thorn-crowned Christ before the people, who demand the release of Barabbas and the death of Christ. The firmness of Pilate is shaken



**PILATE ON THE BALCONY OF HIS PALACE**

Christ is brought in for sentence.

by threats. Once more giving testimony to the innocence of Christ, he frees Barabbas and pronounces the death sentence on Christ.

SCENE 1. The clamoring throng, led by Caiaphas, Annas, Nathanael, and Ezekiel, appear in the street before the palace of Pilate.

SCENE 2. Pilate, disturbed at the threats of the priests, pronounces the death sentence.

Distant shouts are heard; then they come nearer. Caiaphas, Annas, Nathanael, and Ezekiel appear, each leading a mob of people and all crying: "We listen to Moses! We stand by our priests! To death with the false prophet!" When they are all gathered about the Palace, Caiaphas tells them to demand the sentence with violence,—“Threaten a general tumult.”

As Pilate comes out on his balcony, Christ, the crown of thorns on his head, is brought in by two soldiers. The people call out tumultuously, "Judge him, sentence him!" Pilate, looking compassionately toward Jesus, says, "Behold the Man!" He is interrupted by shouts, "To the cross with him!" When Barabbas, the image of a depraved criminal, is brought forward, Pilate hopes that the contrast presented by Christ's noble figure will soften their hearts; but they all cry with one accord, "Release Barabbas!" When asked what shall be done with the king of the

Jews, they answer with a single voice, "Crucify him!" Even now Pilate wishes to let him go, but at last yields to the threats of the people. He calls for water, saying: "I wash my hands. I am innocent of the blood of this just man. It will rest upon you." The priests and the people answer: "We take it upon us. His blood be upon us and upon our children!"

Pilate commands Barabbas to be led away and orders two malefactors to be brought to be condemned with Christ. The death sentence is then read.

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### THIRD DIVISION

*From the sentence by Pilate to the glorious resurrection of the Lord.*

#### REPRESENTATION XV

##### *The Procession to the Cross*

TABLEAU 1. Isaac, appointed for sacrifice, carries the altar-wood up Mount Moriah. *Genesis* xxii. 1-10.

TABLEAU 2. Moses elevates the brazen serpent upon a pole. *Numbers* xxi. 8, 9.

*Action.* Christ, burdened with the cross, is led toward Golgotha. He meets his mourning Mother. Simon of Cyrene is compelled to take the cross. The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus.

SCENE 1. Mary, her companions, John, Joseph of Arimathea.

SCENE 2. They hear the tumult of the approaching crowd.

SCENE 3. Simon of Cyrene.

SCENE 4. The procession of the cross appears, headed by a Roman horseman carrying the Roman standard.

SCENE 5. Centurion with message from Pilate.

Mary, John, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalen, Kleopha, and Salome have come to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. As they come through the streets, they hear a great noise in the distance. As it draws nearer it grows to a tumult of shouts and cries. A great crowd of people come through the gateway, among them a Roman horseman bearing the Roman standard, S. P. Q. R., followed by Roman soldiers. Then come the lictors with Christ who, worn out with fatigue and pain, is borne almost to the earth by the weight of his heavy cross. Close behind come the priests, the Pharisees, and the two thieves bearing smaller crosses. They are surrounded by a mocking, jeering throng of people. As they come into sight Mary cries: "It is he! O God! It is my son, my Jesus!" The progress is very slow, and at last Christ sinks to the ground beneath the heavy burden. The execu-

tioners, catching sight of Simon of Cyrene, who with basket on arm has appeared some moments earlier, place the cross on his broad shoulders. He remonstrates, but as he sees the noble, sorrowful figure of Christ bowed to the earth, a look of love and grief comes into his face. "What do I see? The holy Man of Nazareth? For love of thee will I carry it. O that I could by doing it be worthy of thee!"

One of the executioners pushes the bowed figure of Jesus and tries to hurry him on, but they have to wait a little. As he rises Veronica comes to him and offers him a linen cloth with which to wipe the blood and sweat from his face. As the procession moves on, it is halted by a messenger from Pilate, who orders the Captain to come to him at once. The procession now disappears, the people crying: "To the cross with him! To the cross! Long live the Synagogue!"

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## REPRESENTATION XVI

### *Jesus on Golgotha*

The Prologus and Chorus of Protecting Spirits appear clad in black mantles. Heavy hammer-blows are heard during the singing.

*Action.* Jesus is raised on the cross. The crowd scoff at him. His last words and death.



**JOHN, 1890, 1900**

**Peter Rendl, who in 1910 represents "Joseph of Arimathea."**



The descent from the cross. Provision made by the Jews for watching the grave. The burial of his body.

SCENE 1. Calvary. The cross on which Christ is already fastened is raised to position. The casting of lots ; the death.

SCENE 2. The lance thrust.

SCENE 3. The priests appoint a watch for the grave.

SCENE 4. The descent from the cross.

The Protecting Spirits, clad in black mantles, walk solemnly and sadly on to the stage. During the address of the Prologus heavy hammer-blows are heard from behind the scenes. As the curtains part, the scene on Calvary appears. The thieves already hang on their crosses. In the centre on the ground is the Christ, nailed to the cross. An executioner affixes the inscription, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," and the cross is raised to position. The silence in the auditorium is broken only by the sobs that many are unable to repress. There is the beautiful, majestic figure that we have followed from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem up to this moment, when, forsaken by all his followers, he hangs on Calvary. The crowd that in the beginning shouted hosannas to his name are now reviling him.

All that follows is as related in the Gospels. The soldiers cast lots for the garments, the priests taunt their victim : " He saved others. Himself he cannot save." As they call to him to come down from the cross, since he is " the Son of God," he says, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and to the thief on his right, who begs Christ to remember him when he comes into his Kingdom, " This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." When Jesus sees his Mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he says : " Woman, behold thy son ! Son, behold thy Mother." He cries in tones of anguish, " Eloi ! Eloi ! Lama Sabachtani," and a moment later, bowing his head, " It is finished. Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit."

Darkness falls and the earth trembles. When word is brought to the priests that the veil of the Temple has been rent in twain, they hurry away, but soon return to claim the body. At this moment Joseph of Arimathea enters with a servant of Pilate, who says, " I have orders to inform you that the body is to be delivered over to this man as a gift from the Prefect." The priests, furious at this rebuff, make a further attempt, but the centurion upholds the order of Pilate. After taking down the bodies of the thieves, they all go off, leaving Mary and her friends at the foot of the cross.



**THE SCENE OF THE CRUCIFIXION**  
The Christus hangs on the cross for twenty minutes.



Now follows one of the most moving and impressive scenes of the Passion Play, the descent from the cross. It is in some respects like the celebrated painting of that name by Rubens. Throughout the auditorium there is a silence that can be felt as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, standing on ladders placed against the cross, gently remove the crown of thorns and the nails. Then by means of a long linen cloth, passed across the chest and under the arms, Nicodemus slowly lowers the body to the arms of Joseph of Arimathea, who, saying : " O sweet holy burden ! Come upon my shoulders," tenderly receives it. Assisted by John and the others, he reverently lays it at the knee of the sorrowing Mother. They then anoint the body and carry it away to the tomb. The whole scene is portrayed with the utmost love and devotion.

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## REPRESENTATION XVII

*The Resurrection*

The Chorus of Protecting Spirits appear again in bright mantles.

*Action.* Christ rises. The watchers at the grave fall in awe.

After the address of the Prologus the Protecting Spirits sing a burial song.

In this scene, as four soldiers watch before the

tomb, an angel thrusts the stone away and Christ appears. The soldiers fall to the ground in awe. As they recover themselves, they see that the grave is open, and on looking in find it empty. They hasten away to inform the Pharisees.

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### CLOSING REPRESENTATION

#### *Last words of Prologus*

Rejoice, O friends, and return home, fortified by the great love you have this day beheld. Fill your hearts with adoration of Him who gave His life for you, and whose love from heaven now guides you. There reunited with our Saviour we shall all meet again.

#### *The Hallelujah Chorus*

TABLEAU. The Ascension.

Once more the Chorus of Protecting Spirits appear, and after the closing words of the Prologus, they sing a song of victory, a hallelujah chorus. During the last verse the tableau of the Ascension is shown. As the curtain falls, the chorus step forward and in tones of triumphant rejoicing sing :—

*“ Hallelujah !*

*“ Praise, Adoration, Honor, Glory and Majesty be to Thee from Everlasting to Everlasting.”*

## CHAPTER VIII

### CLOSING SCENES OF PASSION SUMMER

THE representation has lasted eight hours, during which the interest has not flagged for a single moment. It has all seemed real. The sun has shone upon the players, the breezes have lifted their hair, birds have flitted in and out, and through it all we have seen the blue sky and the mountains.

All who take part in this wonderful drama have the "rarest power of imaginative self-surrender." They seem not to be acting, but to be living their parts. Consequently there is never any ranting or anything theatrical about them. All their emotion is controlled. All the characters express the dignity of the Orient even in the stress of great excitement or anger. This is true not only of the single characters but also of the great crowds, which gather and disappear with the naturalness of real life, as at the entry into Jerusalem, when there are from five to seven hundred people on the stage at once.

Those who saw Anton Lang's Christus in 1900 will remember with what strength and dignity he represented the sacred character. During the

whole eight hours of the Play in which he was the dominant figure, in the first part by his warm, human, lofty utterances and action, in the second by his eloquent silence, there was nothing to offend the most sensitive religious feeling. Through it all he expressed the Christ qualities as they are pictured in the New Testament: dignity, strength, gentleness, tenderness, humility, love, gratitude for affection, compassion, forgiveness.

That this representation brings home to those who witness it the truths of the New Testament as books or sermons could never do has been testified to by many people. In 1900, after one of the representations, I was interpreting for an English clergyman. His eyes were swollen from weeping. Evidently much moved by the Play, he told me he had come all the way from Australia to see it, but that when he reached England his friends there had tried to dissuade him from coming to Oberammergau, saying that the people were giving the Play from mercenary motives. "But," he added, "having come so far I decided to come the rest of the way and see for myself. How thankful I am that I came! Never have I realized the reality, the truth of the New Testament narrative as I do to-day!" Another witness said to me: "After seeing the Passion Play, one can never be the same again. Life has a new meaning." Still another writes: "To describe





**JOHANN LANG**

A leading spirit in Oberammergau during his whole life. In 1900, burgomaster and director of Passion Play. Died June 17, 1900.

in detail the scenes of this drama is no easy task. To convey a true idea of it in words, or to form an adequate conception of its simple grandeur without personally seeing it, is impossible. It was a sight which no man, whatever may have been his education or his religious opinions, could look upon without some feeling and without carrying away a deep and lasting impression." Luther in his "Table-Talk" says: "These representations strike the imagination of the people through their eyes, and move them often far more than public preaching."

The one sad day of the summer to those who take part in the Play is that on which the last performance is given. All through the day traces of tears are seen on their faces. When it is over and they go back to their dressing-rooms to lay aside their beloved garments, they give vent to their sorrow. Many feel that when the next Passion summer comes they will not receive the same rôles, and some ask themselves if in ten years they will be alive.

On the morning following the last performance a service of thanksgiving is held in the village church at nine o'clock. From here the villagers all go to the Passion theatre, where an address is made by the burgomaster. On October 3, 1900, Josef Mayr gave the address.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Josef Mayr died December 1, 1903.

After relating the history of the vow and the Play during the centuries, he spoke of the happiness the summer had brought to them in their fulfilment of the vow. He ended the address by exhorting them all to go back to their work with glad hearts and renewed zeal.

Early the next morning all of the players and many of the other villagers made a pilgrimage to the Monastery of Ettal. Sebastian Lang (Caia-phas), in the midst of a band of boys carrying banners, led the procession. After them came Anton Lang (Christus), surrounded by the young men of the village. Then followed in succession the older men, the Burgomaster and Council, the priest in robes, acolytes bearing cross and candles, the little girls, and finally the women. They all chanted prayers as they walked through the valley in the fresh morning air. Reaching the village of Ettal at eight o'clock, the people held a brief service, and at its close the procession filed past the high altar on which was the sacred image of the Madonna brought so long ago from Italy.

Two weeks after the Play was over the village showed few traces of the streams of people who had been pouring through it for five months. The men who had worn the robes of kings and priests and disciples had donned their working garb and were living the devout and faithful lives that enable them to give their marvellous drama.



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